1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

583 [177] (Peter Tom) were dashed when, after a period of living with his sweetheart, the girl's father (River Joe) forbade the legalization of the union by the missionary.

The English word "married" is generally reserved by Kaska speakers to designate unions which have been sanctioned by the Roman Catholic missionary. Approximately four out of five families with children have been instituted with religious sanction and the ideal attitudes of the people are strongly in favor of such "church marriages." "Married more better," River Joe explained. "No married, people split all the time that way." Generally by the time religious recognition of a marriage is sought, the couple have already "stayed together" in the girl's family for a year or more. Such staying together, once it has continued for a time, can be said to constitute "Injun married" or "blanket marriage."

From the foregoing it will be clear that no hard and fast line can be drawn between the period of bride service and the inception of a marriage relationship. Often the two gradually merge one into the other and it is mainly by the boy's behavior toward the girl that a state of marriage can be diagnosed. If the boy appears in public with his finacée, buys grub for her, and if they share their own dwelling, then marriage has occurred. Even these diagnostics may lack clear significance, however, in the case of an unattached older adolescent girl who seeks support for the winter by living with a youth (who purchases a joint winter outfit) but in the summer returns to independent living.

591 [553] Following marriage, the woman gradually becomes known by the man's surname. The husband builds a cabin or tent frame near his wife's parents' dwelling. The form of marriage is always monogamous and has been so during the past forty years.

595 One rather exceptional instance of what might be considered as true polyandry was noted. For five years Dorothy Plover had been married to a white man who acknowledged some slight degree of Cree ancestry. He was much older than Dorothy and by him she had borne one child. In Lower Post, while continuing to live with this husband, Dorothy simultaneously began to live with another and also much older white man (her first husband's employer), who allegedly fathered her second child. After some months, Dorothy's first husband, although he continued to refer to the woman as his wife, moved a short distance from the town and Dorothy began openly to live with the putative father of her second baby. This behavior was commented upon rather unfavorably by several Indians, who referred to Dorothy's revival of an "old fashioned way." Dorothy's father, a Tahltan Indian, raised no serious objection to the second union when he visited Lower Post.

586 [177] Non-support, cruelty, and infidelity are the reasons commonly given for divorce in Kaska society. Divorce is simply accomplished by separation, although when a church wedding has occurred this form of divorce is of course not sufficient to bring about legal dissolution of a marriage. Several years ago the remarriage of an improperly divorced man led to his arrest and imprisonment and the incident is still recalled as an illustration of the binding nature of church marriage.[22] Within the society little notice is taken of separation unless it occurs between a couple who have been married for some time and have children. In divorce, children remain with the mother unless they are old enough to prefer the father and able to care for themselves. Statistics on divorce were difficult to obtain. The incidence is undoubtedly high in marriages which do not have a legally binding character but here,

[22] See Old Man's autobiographical sketch below, p. 323.

1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

as we have mentioned above, unions of older girls (like Irene Wiley) with unattached men are sometimes so transitory as to warrant doubt of their classification as marriages. 586

Community reactions to divorce may perhaps be best illustrated by giving in some detail an incident occurring during the period of field work. In the spring of 1945 Nitla brought his wife, Adele, and two year old daughter from Simpson Lake to his father's home on the Upper Liard River. Here the couple put up in a cabin belonging to Nitla's brother, John Kean. John had been married twice previously. His first wife died in childbirth while the second woman, Anna Man, left him. Following Nitla's arrival at Old Kean's place, John became interested in Adele and she reciprocated his attention. When the Upper Liard Indians moved downriver, where some of them spent the summer camping at the Highway crossing, Adele and her baby joined them and lived with John while Nitla went on to Lower Post. Here Nitla complained to friends about his brother's behavior. Community sentiment was with Nitla and against John, who was spoken of as having "stolen" his brother's wife.

Although the marriage of Nitla and Adele had never been religiously solemnized, the missionary, hearing of the separation, decided to try both to effect a reconciliation and at the same time give the marriage a binding character. With the diocesan bishop (who was visiting in Lower Post) the priest went to the Bridge. However his attempt to talk with Adele was unsuccessful, as the girl refused to leave her tent and the clerics were forced to abandon their efforts. Since by this time the affair had become common knowledge, rationalizations seemed called for. To friends Adele explained that she had left her husband because the latter did not treat her well. She alleged that Nitla did not leave her with enough wood, and that he often left her without food for several days. She pointed out that Nitla did not even have a tent to house his family. These conditions, she maintained, forced her to live in John's accommodations and to share the latter's food. 586 797

Most of these charges were denied by Nitla, who at once began efforts to secure some food and a mosquito tent. He accused his brother of having fought him and asserted that he did not want to lose his wife and particularly not his daughter. 586

Meanwhile John Kean was also on the defensive. Twice he threatened Old Man with physical violence for interfering in the affair. Steadfastly he denied that he wanted to keep Adele, explaining that he was merely looking after the girl in his brother's absence at Lower Post. To Nitla, however, John was reported to have explained that Adele preferred him and what could he do if she refused to leave him alone?

The summer drew to a close without the matter being settled. John and Adele returned upriver first and again began living together in John's cabin. When Nitla arrived he was given sleeping space in the house but relations with his wife were strained and the couple did not have sexual relations. Now for the first time Old Man began to refer to Adele as John's "missus." In other words, public opinion began to recognize that a divorce and remarriage had occurred. Nitla, bowing to the inevitable, took his property from John's cabin and, in the face of his brother's angry protestations, went to live at Old Man's place. Here Nitla dictated a letter to his father-in-law at Simpson Lake affirming that he had always treated his wife and child well and that he had not abandoned them. The purposes of the letter, he indicated, were to counteract any malicious rumors which John might circulate and to keep himself in his father-in-law's good graces. He suspected that John would take

1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

586 Adele to Simpson Lake and would probably try to persuade the girl's father to recognize Adele's new relationship. Shortly after this Nitla left Old Man's place to go to Lower Post.

From this point on it was no longer possible to remain clearly in touch with events as they transpired. Apparently Nitla returned to his father's place and found that, as a result of a series of bitter quarrels, Adele and John had become estranged. In mid-December John reported to the ethnographer that Nitla and Adele were living together on Nitla's father's trap line.

The case is admittedly open to several interpretations but it may serve as an illustration of the interrelated attitudes underlying divorce and of the rationalizations adopted by each member of a triangle to defend himself in the face of public opinion. It is interesting that, despite adverse sentiment, Adele and John were not avoided by other young couples (including John's former wife), but that John and Adele were often reluctant to show themselves in public. Nitla, who felt he had right on his side, found no social pressures he could employ to reestablish his control over either his wife or child. Eventually he was forced to withdraw. In one of his last interviews at Old Man's place he gave some indication of the strength of his emotional reactions. "Can't sit down one place," he said. "Too much worry. Can't stay here. Good-bye—sometime get meat." Asked what he worried about, Nitla replied: "I worry. Your missus stay alone for other man, you can't feel good. I go down Lower Post. He keep my girl too. He say he never keep your girl. He just fool for me . . . Crazy man! No good for woman. That first girl he can't keep it. He get it again. He lick him too. . . . Sometime too much think about it. I don't want to stay here. Too much think about it. . . . Well, he hurting my heart now. I can't let him go my kids. No matter how many mile I go, I can't forget my kids. My kids he hold your mother for me now."

587 While widows are noticeably slow in seeking a new spouse, both divorced and widowed men are quick to seek remarriage. Generally such secondary marriages are more easily accomplished by widowers than by divorcees, since the reputation of the latter is seldom calculated to inspire a woman's confidence. Often a young man who has lost his wife through death will ask her parents for one of her sisters; such a request is readily granted and this may be regarded as a preferred form of secondary marriage. Older men who have been widowed tend to marry widows. Bride service does not occur with a remarriage if the husband already possesses his own trap line and independent residence. Such a man will, however, generally stand ready to assist his father-in-law in any major piece of construction.

843 *Pregnancy.* Like childbirth, pregnancy is not marked by excessive concern or anxiety either in the case of the mother or other people immediately concerned with the process. In the early period of pregnancy the woman exhibits little concern with her own health or with the safety of the fetus. Pregnant girls were observed bicycling and wrestling into the fifth and sixth months. Housework duties and even traveling are continued until the time of parturition. Sometimes this lack of concern results in accidents. Thus John Keans' [845] first wife, who was almost ready to deliver, died in a sleigh upset that promoted miscarriage. Commenting on this lack of precaution, Old Man said: "They're not smart. She don't know what's wrong. . . . That's why she die." In the later period of pregnancy a woman is sometimes shy and retires from public appearances. At no time is a woman's pregnancy discussed or commented upon, the process being politely ignored.

ceremonial way, even if he was very much older than she was. Anisti or people who were of high rank through wealth always aimed to have their children marry among their own class. Sometimes lads or girls of this class followed their hearts and against their class interests married persons who were poor and of low rank. This, however, was exceptional, as it was not easy to go against the wishes of their parents and relatives, and, as it were, lose their cast. This is now almost all broken down as people are about equal to each other nowadays in wealth and the old aristocracy of wealth exists no longer. If a husband habitually ill-treated his wife her father could take her back by paying him for his loss. This was about equal to or a little over the value of the marriage presents received for his daughter and the gifts the husband after marriage had given to him.

Polygamy was practised, but very few men had more than one wife. A few had two. This practice had now died out. No woman had more than one husband.

If a man's wife died her unmarried sister was supposed to become his next wife. If for some reason he did not marry, his children if young were taken by his deceased wife's relatives to be reared by them.

As a nephew succeeded his uncle and inherited his property he also was expected to marry or at least support his uncle's widow.

6: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945)1954 ND12 Nahane ND12
Upper Liard
Dease River

838 sought young men as sexual partners, with whom he secured orgasm by apposing the glans of the penes. In the morning the homosexual rewarded his lovers with gifts, treating them "just as good as women." Although dressing as a man, the homosexual removed his clothing during sexual relations. Once he tried to secure anal intromission with a sleeping man who had been eating fat and who defecated against his would-be seducer. Female homosexuals simulated copulation by "getting on top of each other." Such women were often transvestites, but no male transvestites could be recalled. Sometimes if a couple had too many female children and desired a son to hunt for them in later years, they selected a daughter to be "like a man."[20] When she was about five year's old the parents tied the dried ovaries of a bear to her inner belt. She wore this amulet for the rest of her life in order to avoid conception. The girl was raised as a boy. She dressed in masculine attire and performed male allocated tasks, often developing great strength and usually becoming an outstanding hunter. She screamed and broke the bow and arrows of any boy who made sexual advances to her. "She knows that if he gets her then her luck with game will be broken." Apparently such a girl entered homosexual relationships.

839 Behavior corresponding to sexual sadism, masochism, and exhibitionism could not be recalled. Mentally ill women and old men sometimes publicly revealed their genitals. Voyeurs received a scolding but were not physically punished. Animal contacts occurred only rarely. Necrophilia appears to have been totally incompatible with the prevailing attitudes toward the dead, an interpretation concurred in by our informant.[21]

832 833 838 839 *Dease River Kaska.* Love songs constituted a means of winning girls' favors and also possessed magical properties designed to create favorable attitudes toward the wooer. In coitus the woman lay on her back. Cunnilinctus was denied but a rare woman performed fellatio as a preliminary to intercourse. Berdaches were unknown but the informant agreed that both male and female homosexuality sometimes occurred. Homosexual men engaged in sodomy, oral contacts being carefully avoided. Two women achieved orgasm through clitoral friction. An upper Liard River informant reported a case in which some Dease River youths who had killed a cow moose copulated with the animal, an act blamed for the subsequent depopulation of the Dease basin.

MARRIAGE

581 586 *Upper Liard Kaska.* Ideally marriages were for permanency and a man who tried to leave his wife would be urged by the community to reconsider his decision. Despite these ideal attitudes divorce was common.

581 [885] A man sought a wife "to dry meat for him," sew clothing, cook his meals, and perform the many other services culturally allocated to women. Marriage brought a youth a certain increment in prestige, marking as it did the transition to adulthood. It promised

[20] In Montenegro and other Balkan countries it was not uncommon for a girl to swear virginity and occupy the role of a son in a family without boys. Durham, *Some Tribal Origins, Laws, and Customs of the Balkans* (1928), 211.

[21] See below, p. 137. Thus do cultures limit the scope of deviation. See Mead, *Male and Female* (1949), 147.

6: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945)1954 ND12 Nahane ND12
Upper Liard
Dease River

593 539 was gone. The children too had been killed. Her husband was gone. The older brother said, "Don't think anything about it till we see our brother-in-law and see how he treats us."

The widower found a beaver den and set a net. He got two beaver. From one he removed the fat and he ate the other. Then his brothers-in-law came along. The husband began to weep. He asked them, "Have you seen what I have done?" He added, "You can kill me if you want to." The older brother said, "I'll do nothing till you eat." The husband picked up a piece of fat and cooked it while holding it in his hand. This gesture demonstrated his courage. He knew he was in danger of being killed but was warding off danger with a show of fearlessness and resistance to pain. He offered some meat to the brothers. When they had eaten the elder said, "I'll let you go because your hand is half-cooked now. I'm not going to bother you. I still have a younger sister at home."

593 171 Two observations may be offered concerning this anecdote, first, the responsibility assumed by a brother for his sister's moral conduct in relation to her husband stands out. Second, the use of deliberately induced pain to demonstrate courage should be noted. Both of these patterns are strongly and formally developed in the Plains Culture Area. Not only is the husband in the tale forgiven for killing the stingy woman but he is promised one of her sisters as a new wife.

586 [754] Divorce aroused neither sharp criticism or shame, although the deserted spouse might display more or less resentment. Sometimes a man used sorcery to kill the woman who had quit him or to cause her children by the subsequent husband to die. Reasons for divorce included the desire of one marriage partner for another man or woman (perhaps a man who could provide a richer living than the current husband), cruelty, and adultery. Women did not always permanently quit husbands who treated them badly. Sometimes a wife merely ran off to spend a night in the bush. In case of divorce older children remained with the husband while infants went with the mother. When he became grown-up, a son might return to his father. Both patterns suggest the recency and superficial imposition of matrilineal descent in the culture.

587 Economic benefits accrued to a widow and her children under the levirate. However, unless the real or classificatory brother were single or the husband of the widow's sister he could not live intimately with the woman but merely supported her and her children in his camp.[27] Under such circumstances a widow would remarry following a two year period of mourning and upon receiving the consent of her brother-in-law. To choose a new husband closely following a man's death, aroused the jealousy of the deceased husband's ghost. As already noted, when a wife died her father frequently invited the bereaved husband to choose a sister-in-law as his spouse and might even insist that the latter be taken.[28]

582 583 *Dease River Kaska.* Boys married when they could provide sufficient meat and skins for a family, a girl when she was capable of performing household duties and understood the responsibilities of married life, particularly its ideal of faithfulness. Incest rules extended to include one's moiety. Each sex normally secured the parents' consent

[27] Here lies a powerful incentive for two brothers to marry a pair of sisters. Such a marriage readily accomodates the levirate. It would be desirable to know if there is a significant correlation between these two traits when a large series of cultures are compared.

[28] Levirate and sororate have both been reported for the Tlingit. Among these coastal people a nephew sometimes inherited the widow or the niece of a deceased woman might marry the widower. Jones, *Study of the Thlingets of Alaska* (1914), 129.

6: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945)1954 ND12 Nahane ND12
Dease River
Tsalona
Upper Liard

to a proposed match. Where such permission was withheld, elopement might follow. The eloping couple then lived alone or, more often, joined another camp. Sometimes angry parents pursued the young people and beat the youth if they caught him. In the normal course of events a young man undertook bride service for a year in the home of his father-in-law. During this period he contrived to have secret sexual relations with his intended spouse. A wealthy father-in-law terminated bride service with a feast, after which the couple were regarded as man and wife. Occasionally fathers arranged engagements between children. Contracted without gift exchange, these agreements were not absolutely binding on the young people and could be abrogated for sufficient cause. Only single men utilized the war party to secure a wife. Residence after marriage was matrilocal.

Sororal polygyny remained limited to wealthy men. Never did a man live with more than two women, plural wives "always got along with each other." The idea of an unrelated woman as co-wife was strongly resented and the presence of such a woman in camp would provoke endless quarreling.[89] Fraternal polyandry existed and is illustrated in a tale reported by Teit, titled "The Deceitful Wife."[90] A woman, married to two brothers, happened to be raped by a war party that prepared to attack her people. The ordeal weakened the woman but the enemy offered her ptarmigan. In return she promised to conceal what had happened. The mother-in-law, however, became suspicious and spoke to her sons. As a result the two husbands sensed danger and proposed to the wife that they all three enjoy a last good meal together. They thereupon killed the woman and fled. An upper Liard River informant reported knowledge of a Dease River Indian who had shared his wife with nine brothers. The ten men alternated in cohabiting with the woman and no trouble ever occurred between them. However, the brothers became extremely jealous when they saw a stranger talk to their wife and reported the incident to the senior husband who warned off the intruder.

Divorce sometimes followed adultery and occasionally a man quit a barren wife. Upon her husband's death a widow became the responsibility of her brother-in-law.

Tselona. People favored marriage between cross cousins. "Its good for them," the informant explained. The levirate and sororate both obtained.

OLD AGE AND DEATH

Upper Liard Kaska. Many Indians did not live to see old age. Others found their declining years filled with waning prestige and dissatisfaction. With menopause cul-

[89] Allard says: "Polygamy existed among them when they were all pagans. One man would take as many wives as conditions would allow. For instance, if he were a good hunter he would take more than one wife. When I visited the Kaska for the first time in 1925, I found no polygamy among them . . . they had never seen a Catholic priest in their country, but being in their native state more moral than the other races of Indians, the influence of their brethern, the Si kan ni, led them easily to abandon polygamy." (Allard, *Notes on the Kaska and Upper Liard Indians* [1928], 25.) We feel incined to ascribe the loss of polygyny much more to the influence of the white men who invaded the Dease River valley after 1872. Cf. Honigmann, *Culture and Ethos of Kaska Society* (1949), 44–45.

[90] Teit, *Kaska Tales* (1917), 461–462.